

NEAC in A.P.

1414. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have invited project proposals from non-governmental organisations to participate in the NEAC 2000-2002 in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details of the projects and financial help expected to be offered; and

(c) the number of proposals formulated with the guidance of Deccan Development Society and submitted?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government have been inviting project proposals from the interested organisations including non-governmental organisations to participate in the NEAC every year in the country including Andhra Pradesh.

(b) and (c) During 2000-2001, 1192 proposals were received in respect of Andhra Pradesh for awareness activities like camps, padyatras, rallies, public meetings, exhibitions, essay/debate/painting poster competitions, folk dances and songs, street theatre, puppet shows etc. out of which 275 proposals were provided financial assistance to the extent of Rs. 15.98 lakhs. For the current year, the proposals are required to be submitted to the Regional Resource Agencies (RRAs) by 20th August, 2001. Deccan Development Society being the designated RRA for Andhra Pradesh is required to provide assistance to NGOs and other organisations for formulation of proposals.

Re-thrusting the Forest (Conservation) Act

1415. PROF. RAM DEO BHANDARY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some State Governments, particularly Madhya Pradesh, have requested the Union Government for re-thrusting the present Forest (Conservation) Act;

- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government have considered this issue; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the action proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) to (d) Requests have been received from the States of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh for review of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. However, no specific request has been received for re-thrusting the present Act. The request for review relates primarily to delegation of limited powers to State Governments to decide small projects and for streamlining the procedures under the said Act to cut short the delay in according forest clearances.

As far as delegation of powers to State Governments is concerned, it requires amendment in the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. However, in view of an ongoing public interest litigation WP(C) No. 2024)5 in the Supreme Court in which implementation of this Act by the State Governments is one of the main issues under review, it would not be advisable to amend the Act for the time being.

This Ministry has already initiated several measures to streamline the procedures to cut short the delay, which has resulted in expeditious decision on the proposals at the Central Government level. However, State/UT Governments have also important role to play in effective implementation of the Act including faster clearances. In the past few months, meetings have been held with the Governments of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa at the highest level where it has emerged that considerable delay is occurring at the State Government level. The matter has been taken up with all State/UT Governments to simplify their procedure for processing and submission of proposals to the Central Government and early compliance of the stipulated conditions.